

Cryptantha leucophaea (Dougl.) Pays
gray cryptantha
Boraginaceae (Borage Family)

Status: State Sensitive, USFWS Species of Concern
Rank: G2G3S2S3

General Description: Perennial with clustered stems 6-16 inches tall; herbage mostly sericeous-strigose below, becoming hispid-setose only upward; bristles of the leaves mostly appressed and inconspicuous, those on the upper surface of the lower leaves often poorly developed and scarcely pustulate, or wanting; leaves relatively narrow and elongate, all tapering to an acute or acutish tip, the lower 2-4 inches long (poorly defined petiole included) and $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, the cauline ones similar but becoming sessile and sometimes $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide; flowers whitish with yellow centers; corolla tube evidently surpassing the calyx at anthesis, the limb $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch wide; nutlets ovate, smooth and shining, gray, $\frac{3}{16}$ inch long, sharp-edged, the scar closed; style moderately or strongly surpassing the nutlets.

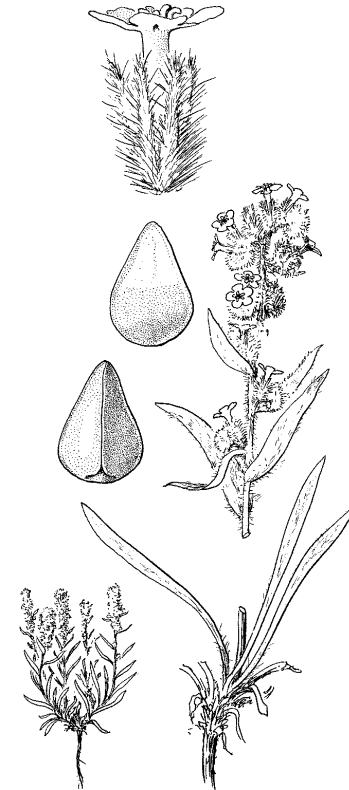
Identification Tips: *Cryptantha leucophaea* is distinct differentiated from other perennial species of the genus and is unlikely to be confused with any other species. Distinguishing characters include the perennial habit, smooth nutlets, and corolla tube that is longer than the calyx at anthesis.

Phenology: The species flowers in May and June.

Range: Regional endemic, known from the Columbia and lower Yakima Rivers in the western Columbia Basin, from Wenatchee, WA to The Dalles, OR. In WA, the species is currently known from Benton, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties and historically Douglas County. Occurs in the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

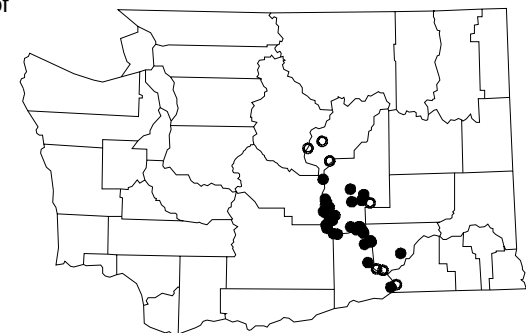
Habitat: *Cryptantha leucophaea* occurs on sandy substrate along the Columbia River within the Columbia Basin physiographic province. Associated species include pale evening-primrose (*Oenothera pallida*), needle-and-thread grass (*Stipa comata*), bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), snow

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Known distribution of
Cryptantha leucophaea in
Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Habitat (continued): buckwheat (*Eriogonum niveum*), sulfur penstemon (*Penstemon attenuatus*), crouching milk-vetch (*Astragalus succumbens*), hoary chaenactis (*Chaenactis douglasii*), and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*). Elevation 300 to 2500 feet.

Ecology: The taxon is basically restricted to sand dunes that have not been completely stabilized, i.e., areas where there is still some movement of sand. It would appear to be dependent on the strong winds of the region and the availability of open sand.

State Status Comments: The narrow habitat requirements and the loss of habitat (including the potential future loss) are primary factors in the status of this species.

Inventory Needs: Appropriate habitats within the range of this species should continue to be inventoried.

Threats and Management Concerns: ORV use and increased weed invasions are the primary threats. Cheat grass, knapweed (*Centaurea* spp.), and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*) have all become established within portions of the species' habitat. Changes in sand deposition and agricultural conversion also pose threats.

References:

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 4: Ericaceae through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 597 pp.